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## A TYPICAL CASE OF MEASLES

BY NORMA SAUER SELBERT, R.N.

*Columbia, Missouri*

I went unwillingly, when Dr. C. asked me to take a case of measles. I had been much confined in the past six months, moreover, I was tired, and caring for a child meant constant exertion by day, needless disturbance by night, inappreciation, coaxing, etc. The thought of the tedious monotony and confinement of quarantine appalled me.

I found my patient, a blue-eyed boy of six years, neatly tucked in a brass bed in his own, well-ventilated room. The mother was winsome and intelligent, and in order to protect her infant daughter from infection, she agreed to my plans for strictest quarantine. The boy's own room and the bathroom adjoining were to be our quarters for the next few weeks.

Two days before, he had seemed to have a feverish cold with eyes "watery." The conjunctiva were affected and marked photophobia was noticed. Next day came a general malaise; loss of appetite, coughing, and sneezing; small bluish white spots having a red base were noticed; his throat was red and blotchy on the mucous membrane opposite the molar teeth. This very characteristic and pathognomonic sign (Koplik's sign) soon passed away.

When I arrived the boy seemed listless, and since I had not had much to do with children for about a year, I feared I might not be able to please and reign. "Here, dear," said I, "will you hold this under your tongue and close your lips?" He seemed to take the thermometer most eagerly. As soon as he was permitted to speak, he explained: "My mother used to suck one of dese in de Christ Hospital when she wuz there. I always wanted to suck it but she said I would break it." He had two teeth out in front and he said he sucked it "through dis gap in the teeth." Seeing that the oral temperature tallied with a rectal temperature, we always took "a smoke in the gap."

The following day was the fourth day; the eruption appeared first on forehead, neck, then behind ears and around nose. Finally the whole body looked as though it had been "boiled," therefore we pretended that Ellis was a clown who was painted red and white.

He dreaded a bath, and to avoid tears we pretended that I was putting cream and sugar on a strawberry, when I was "putting the bath on his red body." The rag was sugar, and the towel, cream. Sometimes he was an Indian warrior and I was "stroking him with war paint" when I washed him, and when I patted him dry with the

towel, I pretended to be "dabbing in another color." At this point he suddenly turned into a knight and I put his armor on, his pajamas. The fever rose gradually until the end of the fifth day. It reached 102.6° F., then fell by crises after profuse perspiration.

His tongue was coated. We had read a story in which a mute hero carried a message to "his side of the war" on his tongue. The sentinels searched him but not finding any note, permitted him to pass on. So after that I was always dabbing his dry lips with war paint when I dabbed glycerine and lemon on them. We had read about an Indian chief who took frequent drinks from a bottle of poison which a wonderful warrior's spirit had given him, to make him immune to disease. Thus he took willingly, almost eagerly, the vile mixture left by the doctor who, we pretended, was a wonderful spirit. Hence, his cough was cured.

Photophobia was intense. We kept his room almost dark, and we pretended that we were cave dwellers and the reason no one came into our room was because ours was a secret cave and no one knew the way into it but we and our good fairies. Our meals were put outside our door. Ellis was being prepared for knighthood and so, like Launfal, was on special diet. His consisted of milk and eggs chiefly.

About the sixth day, the eruption became brown "like a coat of skin on a Spanish chief," said Ellis. When desquamation set in on the eighth day, he said he was "like a fish when he wriggled and splashed tiny drops about him."

I promised to tell everybody that he was nine years old, and to dub him knight on Easter Day, provided he drank two quarts of milk, every twenty-four hours, for six days before. This he did, and on Easter Day he was allowed to sit up in a chair, and in the new robe and slippers which the day brought him, I dubbed him knight by giving him a harmless toy pistol, a bunch of pink carnations, his favorite flower, and serving him with white meat of chicken, baked potato, toast, and ice cream.

We pretended throughout that our clothes were charmed. We immersed them in carbolic solution before we tossed them to the maid who hung them in the sunshine and then put them in the laundry. When we fumigated the room, we pretended Santa Claus' fairies were coming to see what Ellis had. So that they could see all things and not bring the same ones next year, we took everything out of drawers and closets. We burnt many books, since they were sure to bring books. We liberated the fairies when we poured sixteen ounces of formaldehyde on eight ounces of potassium permanganate.

Ellis says, "We will stay pals forever."